

THE 7325

Happiness of dying in the LORD;

WITH

AN APOLOGY for the METHODISTS;

A

S E R M O N :

Preached at Christ-Church, in *Macclesfield*,

On SUNDAY the 22d of *February*, 1784.

OCCASIONED

By the Death of MRS. MARTHA ROGERS,

Wife of JAMES ROGERS, Preacher of the Gospel in
the Rev. Mr. WESLEY's Societies.

By the Rev. DAVID SIMPSON, A. M.

M A N C H E S T E R :

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P R I C E S I X - P E N C E .

Mark the perfect man, and behold the
upright; for the end of that man is peace.
Psalms 37. 37.

We desire to hear of thee what thou
thinkest; for as concerning this sect, we
know that every where it is spoken against.
Acts 28. 22.



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PSALM 116. 5.

*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death
of his saints.*

IT is neither a customary nor an agreeable office to me to preach funeral discourses. The practice, in this neighbourhood, is somewhat singular; by no means, at least, so common as in many other places. And, I think, it is well that it is so, considering the present languid state of pure and undefiled religion. Examples of rare virtue and exalted piety are not frequently to be met with. And these, with a few other extraordinary instances, seem to be the only cases where funeral Sermons are fully justifiable. Whether the present is one of those cases you will be the better able to judge, my brethren, when you have heard me to the end. I own the task is undertaken by me with pleasure, and more especially as it was our dear deceased Friend's particular desire. I had not indeed any long or familiar acquaintance with her, but what I have seen prejudiced me much in her favour; and the desire of dying persons has always much

weight with my mind. She did not however chuse the text which has been read to you; but as it was particularly sweet and precious to her during her illness, and as it is also well adapted to the occasion, I thought our time this afternoon could not be more usefully employed than in contemplating its meaning, and applying it to our mutual benefit and edification.

But before we proceed with the consideration of the text, it may not be improper to obviate certain scruples and objections, which will probably arise in the minds of a considerable number of persons in this numerous assembly.

“What business, say they, have you, as a Clergyman of the Church of England, to preach a funeral sermon for a Methodist Preacher’s Wife?”

Without the least disguise or ambiguity I will endeavour to answer this objection, with others of the same kind, and leave you to judge of my conduct and views, as you, in your wisdom, shall think meet. And I do this the rather, because I would have every person whom it may any way concern, to know what are my private opinions concerning the different religious sects and parties which prevail among us.

And, in the first place, my brethren, I
have

have always considered the people called Methodists as members of our own church, in the strict and proper sense of the words. They profess themselves such; they are baptized as such; they *attend the public service of the church as such; they believe and receive her doctrines; they partake with us of the holy Communion; and, when they die they are happy to lay their bones with us. What further, or better proofs, can any man have, or desire, of their being Members of the Church of England?

“ But, if the Methodists are Members of the Established Church, what necessity is there for them to have preachers of their own, distinct from the regular Clergy?”

A large number of the Established Clergy, and many also among our Dissenting Brethren, are now, and have been for several years, gone off from the doctrine of our Church and the Reformation. They retain the ceremonies and modes of worship which prevailed amongst our ancestors, but have rejected several of the most important doctrines and religious principles: and in the room of them, they have substituted a lean

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and

* Since this sermon was preached, I have been told that many of the Methodists, in different parts of the kingdom, do not attend the service of the established church, and that several of their preachers are Dissenters in principle. The above observations, therefore, in such cases, must be understood with some limitation.

and meagre morality of their own, collected, partly from the books of the Old and New Testament, and partly from the celebrated writers of antient Greece and Rome. Hence the pulpit is every now and then at war with the reading desk, and the reading desk with the pulpit. Their discourses, though oftentimes very sensible, and written in good language, are flat, dull and jejune, and most commonly delivered in a manner equally insipid and unaffecting. The lives also and conduct of the clergy are too frequently what they ought not to be; nay, sometimes they are highly loose and immoral; and instead of being *Ensamples to the flocks over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers*, they are oftentimes the jest and laughing-stock of their associates in dissipation and wickedness. Hence their preaching is of no effect. They do no good. Indeed they do a deal of harm. Instead of turning the wicked from the error of their ways, they are encouraged and confirmed in their iniquity; partly by their evil example, and partly by the pliable nature of the doctrine which they hear from the pulpit.

This, my brethren, this is the true and original cause of the rise and progress of what the world reproachfully calls Methodism.

dism. It is no new religion, as many persons ignorantly suppose; it is only a revival of the old, and almost exploded doctrines of the gospel of Christ and our own church, in a different way. And, if the clergy of the established church had throughout the kingdom done their duty, had lived and preached the gospel and the doctrines of the reformation faithfully, Methodism so called had never made its appearance in the world. The methodist preachers, I conclude therefore, have been raised up by the great Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, to revive the old, exploded, or neglected doctrines of the church of England; to supply the clergy's lack of service, and to provoke us to jealousy and emulation.

And though these preachers are different from the established clergy in several respects, yet it seems they ought rather to be considered as coadjutors and helpers, as labourers together with us in awakening sinners, and in building up the faithful, than as opposers and enemies, or than as a separate body of men, and a distinct denomination of Christians. And if we were good-natured one with another, and friendly one towards another, there is work enough for us all, and the happiest effects might follow. The harvest is plenteous, and the labourers are few. We ought,

ought therefore, rather to strengthen than weaken each others hands. We all aim at the same end, and expect to arrive at the same haven of rest and peace. Let us not fall out by the way, and plunge one another in the dangerous flood, but help each other to gain the land. If mankind are made wiser and better, holier and happier; if Christ is preached and souls saved, *I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice*; whoever are the instruments. The methodist preachers, as far as I have been able to learn, do not pretend to oppose the established church; they do not, as a body of men, administer either the Sacrament of Baptism, or the Lord's Supper; they only preach the Word, and pray with and for the people, and endeavour to convince sinners of the error of their ways, and to build them up in piety and holiness, and so to prepare them for everlasting happiness. And, in a very strong sense, I conceive, this is the duty of every private Christian. That animating address of Saint James is not confined to ministers of the Gospel alone, but is common to every member of the church of Christ: *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth the sinner from the error*

ror of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

It is in their warm attachment to the established church, that the Methodists, as a body of people (for I am told there are many individuals amongst them who are Dissenters in principle) differ, essentially differ from every denomination of Dissenters whatever. Every other denomination of Christians exert all their power and influence to draw off the Members of the Church of England to their own communion. And, if once they are drawn off, they not only cease to assemble with us for the worship of Almighty God, and to baptize their children in our way, and to receive the holy communion with us; but, their minds being alienated from us, and embittered against us, they usually become our most virulent opposers, not only in forms and ceremonies, but oftentimes also in the great leading and fundamental doctrines of the gospel.

This then, I say, is a very great and material difference between the methodists and every denomination of dissenters. The former are the avowed friends, and the latter the declared and determined enemies of the church of Christ, as established in these lands. But

“ Are

“ Are not many of the methodist preachers men of the lowest ranks in life, and destitute of all human learning?”

This objection comes with a very ill grace from those persons who believe, or pretend to believe, the gospel of our common Lord. The great apostle of the Gentiles, though a man of considerable learning and abilities himself, assures us, that in his time *not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble were called; but that God had chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which were mighty; and base things of the world, and things which were despised, yea, and things which were not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.* And a greater than the apostle makes it a matter of praise and thankfulness, that his holy and righteous Father had so constituted the dispensation of the gospel, that the wise, the great, and the learned almost universally rejected it. *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes!* even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

What therefore if the methodist preachers

ers are many of them men of the lowest rank, and of the most inconsiderable attainments in human learning, was not this the case also in the first and purest ages of the gospel? Was not Christ, the Founder of our religion, and was not the glorious company of the apostles, under similar circumstances, both with respect to rank and learning? And did ever men speak like these men? Was ever success in winning souls equal to their success? They possessed not, it is true, those qualifications which are so highly esteemed among men; but then they were furnished by heaven with endowments far superior and more efficacious. They were men of good natural understandings, in common with others, and *full of faith and the Holy-Ghost*. These, I conceive, are the most essential qualifications for a preacher of the everlasting gospel. And without these qualifications, the most accurate knowledge of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew Languages, together with the most ready and familiar acquaintance with all the arts and sciences, will be of little, or no avail. Besides, to speak the truth, without fear of any man, have we not many, very many among the established clergy, who are highly deficient in human learning? And, what is more to be lamented,

lamented, in divine knowledge also? And are not considerable numbers among our dissenting brethren equally superficial in their attainments? Why should we then so liberally throw out our censures upon the methodist preachers for their want of learning, seeing every denomination of Christian teachers is liable, in a considerable degree, to the same censure? Let us be candid. Let us lay aside foolish and ignorant prejudice. Let us acknowledge what is wrong, and approve and applaud what is right and good among all ranks and denominations of men. We have all something worthy of praise, and something deserving of blame. It is highly probable that there is no sect or party of Christians where both eminent learning, and eminent piety are not to be found. The Roman Catholics have their Fenelons and their Rollins; the Dissenters their Wattses and their Doddridge's; the Methodists their Wesleys and their Whitfields, and we of the Establishment (if the last-mentioned names ought to be considered separately, which I by no means allow) a long catalogue of illustrious worthies.

“ But, are not the Methodists very wild and enthusiastical?”

I tell thee, my lukewarm or frozen-hearted

hearted brother, that, let it be as it may with them, it would be well for thee, if thou hadst a little more warmth and fervour than thou art already possessed of. I say, it would be happy for thee. Thou wouldst be no worse a man, and thou wouldst be a much better Christian. We have known indeed both enthusiastic Methodists, Churchmen, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, and Quakers; such, I mean, as have been really wild and extravagant in their religious notions: but these follies and absurdities, into which well-meaning, and even pious people have sometimes fallen, are no just and proper objection to the life and power of godliness. There is as much danger, nay far more, from lukewarmness and a cool indifference in the great things of God and religion, as there is from an over-heated zeal and fervour. For the holy scriptures never reprove our warmth, when properly directed, but command us to love God, not in a small degree, not with a part only of our mental powers, but *with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength*. And our Saviour assures us, that he is so far from approving of your cool, indifferent, half-hearted, rational professors of his gospel, as they affect to call themselves,

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selves, that he *will spue them out of his mouth*, and cast them off for ever!

In short, all large bodies of professing Christians have both weak, wicked, and hypocritical members. Hath the church of England none? Have we no ignorant, foolish, hardened, wicked, or hypocritical persons among us? And all sects, and parties, and numerous bodies of Christians, have, I would charitably hope, many pious, sincere, and upright members. And these pious, sincere, and upright followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, which are to be found amongst the various denominations of believers throughout the world, constitute the real, mystical body and church of Christ here upon earth. All those who hold the Head, Christ Jesus, who believe in him, love him, fear him, obey his laws, and ascribe unto him the whole undivided glory of the soul's salvation, among the Churchmen, Methodists, Catholics and Dissenters; all these, I say, belong to Christ; they are the Elect, the Chosen, the Saints, the Children of God, the Heirs of Glory. All the rest, namely, all unconverted, disobedient, self-righteous, unholy Churchmen, Methodists, Dissenters, and Roman Catholics are of the devil. They are the children of this world, the sons of Belial, the chaff, the tares, the stubble, the reprobate, and have neither part
nor

nor lot in the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. They live without hope, and they shall die without honour. Hear what the oracles of truth say—*Upon the ungodly the Lord shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest, this shall be their portion to drink. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

These, and such as these, are the declarations and distinctions of heaven, and by which we must all stand, or fall at the last day. Omitting therefore every smaller difference, which is, comparatively, of little, or no importance, I would earnestly desire and exhort all pious men of every denomination, and of every religious sentiment, whether they are Churchmen, Methodists, Catholics, or Dissenters, to agree to differ, and to meet one another on the

broad scriptural basis of Christian charity. Let all good men unite together in one indissoluble bond of union, to oppose, not one another, but the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to promote the common interests of Christianity, and the general welfare of the human race. And if there be any thing of a nature not sinful in the religious differences and peculiarities, which prevail among us, let us leave the decision of it to the judgment of the great day. In the mean time, as God, the wisest and best of Beings, *is no respecter of persons*, but a lover of every man *that feareth him and worketh righteousness*, in whatever nation he is found, so let it be among us. Let us love one another. Let us bear with one another. Let us not speak evil one of another; but rather let us do good one to another, always believing that he is the best man, by what name soever he is called, who is of the most loving, patient, meek, and benevolent spirit, and doth the largest share of good and kind actions to the souls and bodies of men. This is undoubtedly the religion of the bible. And were we possessed of the knowledge of angels, the zeal of seraphs, and the orthodoxy of apostles, and still to continue strangers to this practical godliness, this doing-as-we-would-be-

be-done-by religion, we are nothing. We might, were it necessary, quote a large part of the word of God to confirm this assertion:—*Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish: for where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.—Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.—Though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, or an unbounded good will to all the sons of men, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could*

remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things.

Seriously would I recommend the daily perusal of these striking portions of God's word, together with our Saviour's sermon upon the mount, to all the narrow-minded angry bigots, and zealous disputants, of every denomination, throughout the kingdom. Important would be the consequences, and happy the effects, not only to themselves, but to society at large, and to the general interests of religion in the world. Come then, my brethren, and

Discreetly faithful to the hallow'd bonds
Of pure religion, let us, like herself,
Be mild, compassionate, indulgent, wise;
Nor sink another in the dangerous flood
That we may gain the land. Forgiveness shines
The child of reason—rancour is the base
Mishapen progeny of ignorance.
In this our transient day of pain and grief,

“ Sprung

" Sprung from the same great fire, so let us live
 " As owning the fraternal tie divine,
 " And lighten mutually each other's load.
 " We tread the path of life, all bent beneath
 " Affliction's galling weight. A thousand foes
 " Threaten, with aspect stern, our frail existence,
 " Which, always murmuring, we would fain shake off,
 " Yet always cherish with assiduous care.
 " Our devious passions wander; no support,
 " No guide is near: now scorch'd with fierce desire,
 " And now in frozen lassitude congeal'd.
 " The charms of bland society, at least
 " For some short moments, may our pains beguile:
 " A remedy too impotent to heal
 " The unceasing sting of misery. Wherefore then
 " Pollute with venom the few cordial drops
 " Alloted us by heaven?"

Enough, perhaps, hath been said to soften your spirits, my brethren, and to obviate the objections, which, I apprehend, would arise in your minds upon this occasion; we will now, therefore, return to the consideration of the words of our text—
Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

And, we may here in the first place, though very briefly, enquire what the scripture means by a saint, and how any of the sons of men become intitled to that character. Secondly, we may consider in what sense the death of such is *precious in the sight of the Lord*. And, thirdly, we will
 more

more fully apply the whole to the case of our departed neighbour, sister, and friend.

Now saint is a common term made use of in the bible, to express the character of a servant of God. The word signifies holy, and sometimes means one that is ceremonially dedicated, or devoted to God; and, at other times, one that is really like unto him in the frame and disposition of the soul, by being made a partaker of the divine nature. The word occurs no less than a hundred times in the Old and New Testament, and most commonly too in one or other of these senses. It signifies, in the proper and saving sense of the term, a believer in Christ Jesus, a holy and godly, a justified, and sanctified person, one that is internally and externally, freely and willingly, devoted to the service of God, through Jesus Christ.

But, since no man is such by nature, it is reasonable to enquire in what manner, and by what means, any of us may become intitled to this high and honourable distinction? And this is no otherwise than in a way of regeneration. Being born in sin, and by nature the children of wrath, we must be born again, and made the children of God by adoption and grace. The process

process of this great work, and the steps to this exalted character are such as these.

The first is laid in conviction for sin, in a deep, abiding sense of the lost, helpless, and hopeless condition of every child of man, till renewing and regenerating grace is received and felt in the soul. We must see, we must know, we must feel this. And when the Lord, by the powerful energy of his word and spirit, hath taught us this painful and mortifying, though salutary lesson, we must by no means be contented to rest here. For to know that I am wounded, is not to be cured. To know that I am sick, is not to be well. To be convinced and to feel that I am a sinner, is not to be pardoned. To be sensible that I owe more money than I am worth and able to pay, will not discharge my debts and set me at liberty. After we are convinced of sin, therefore, and have tasted, seen, and felt our ruined and miserable condition, as sinners against the great God, we must look about for a deliverer, for one that is both able and willing to save. And, upon the most mature and deliberate consideration, who is there in heaven, or on earth, that is equal to the arduous task, but Jesus? *He is the way, the truth, and the life; and no man cometh unto the Father but by*

by him.—There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we may or can be saved.—His blood alone cleanseth from all sin; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses, or by any other law. The convinced and broken-hearted soul sees this; and seeing it, she flies unto him, being encouraged so to do by his own gracious commands and declarations.—Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.—Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.—Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. The force of such gracious invitations as these being no longer able to resist, she yields herself a willing captive, and finds the knowledge of salvation by the remission of her sins. Being justified by faith, she hath peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, and fills it with peace and assurance for ever.

Thus,

Thus, my brethren, the man that before was a sinner, unpardoned and unholy, in a state of nature, ruin and condemnation, passes from spiritual death and bondage into a state of grace, spiritual life and liberty, and becomes, from being a child of wrath and an heir of misery, a saint, a chosen vessel, “ a member of Christ, a child of God, and “ an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.” His heart is filled with love to God, to his people, to his ways, and to his word. *He does justly, he loves mercy, and walks humbly with his reconciled God and Father in Christ Jesus: and giving all diligence to make his calling and election sure, he adds to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity: and, being careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving letting his requests be made known unto God; the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps his heart and mind, through Jesus Christ. He rejoices evermore, he prays without ceasing, and in every thing he gives thanks, knowing that this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning all his children. In short; he lives happily, dies comfortably, and shall*

shall reign gloriously. Trials he may—
 trials he shall and must have; but his robes
*being washed and made white in the blood of
 the Lamb*, he shall rise superior to all his
 tribulations: yea, *he shall stand before the
 throne of God, and serve him day and night
 in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne
 shall dwell with him. He shall hunger no
 more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the
 sun light on him, nor any heat. For the
 Lamb which is in the midst of the throne
 shall feed him, and shall lead him unto living
 fountains of waters; and God shall wipe
 away all tears from his eyes.*

And now, my brethren, have you under-
 stood these things? If you have, don't you
 conceive it a very desirable thing to be a
 saint? I believe much the greater part of us
 think so: and I am sure we shall all be of
 the same mind when we come to die. For
 let us live as we may, and disbelieve, or
 pretend to disbelieve, whatever we please,
 in the days of health and prosperity, we are
 sure to become converts to piety and reli-
 gion when sickness and dissolution approach
 us. "We may live fools, but fools we
 cannot die."

2. As the character of a saint is a high
 and exalted character, so the death of a
 saint is a precious and desirable death.

Even

Even Balaam could say, that wicked and jesuitical prophet could say, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.* Though he wished to enjoy the wages of unrighteousness while he lived, he could not help being desirous of the rewards of virtue and goodness when he was dead. And have we no Balaams, think you, my brethren, in our days? O! let us be mindful of his unhappy end, and turn our feet from the ways of the destroyer. The love of money, and the love of honour, sunk his soul into everlasting perdition!

But how, or in what sense is the death of a saint *precious in the sight of the Lord*? In a variety of respects. He loves his saints. They are the persons for whom the world was originally created. They are the persons for whom the present frame of nature is upheld, and in behalf of whom all the dispensations of Providence are carrying on. They are the persons for whom the Lord Jesus Christ more *immediately* shed his blood. They are the persons for whom he *ever liveth to make intercession* at his Father's right hand in heaven. And they, and they alone are the persons who shall live and reign in bliss and glory everlasting.

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And though God permits them to be tried in the furnace of affliction and adversity in common with other men, this is only to make them fit for himself, and capable of a more high and exalted degree of life and felicity. And even in death, though *in the sight of the unwise* he seems to forsake them, and to make no distinction between his children and the children of the wicked one; yet to a discerning eye, and on the principles both of natural and revealed religion, there is a difference no less than infinite. Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, the Prophets, Jesus Christ and his Apostles, are all dead. Yea, in some sense, they died *the common death of all men*. They went through many and fiery trials, through pain, and grief, and huge affliction: but who would take upon him to say that there was no difference between their last end, and the last end of a Pharaoh, an Absalom, an Ahithophel, of a Judas, and of all the wicked and unrighteous generation? There is a difference, my brethren, there is an important difference. The hope of the one is full of immortality, while the hope of the other shall assuredly perish. The one is enabled, most commonly, to smile at pain, and to bid defiance to death and the grave; while the other

other groans and is fullen and silent, in fearful expectation of the judgment to come. The death of the one is precious in the sight of the Lord; while the death of the other is accursed. The one, by an eye of faith, *sees Jesus standing on the right hand of power*, and angels waiting to receive him; the soul of the other, if properly sensible, is filled with dark and gloomy prospects. The one dies, and, like Lazarus, is carried on the wings of angels into Abraham's bosom; the other departs and is buried, and, like Dives, *in hell he lifts up his eyes, being in torment*.

Surely then, my brethren, there is a difference, a very great and material difference between the death of a saint and the death of a sinner! A difference, as great as between heaven and hell! The one shall be everlastingly saved, and the other everlastingly damned!

And now, Sirs, I have the pleasure to inform you, that all this which I have spoken, concerning the character and death of a saint, is strictly applicable to that excellent woman whose departure we are assembled to lament.—Lament, did I say? Let me retract the unguarded expression—Whose death we now celebrate! For the man or woman who dies, and dies well,
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shall never more be a subject of lamentation to me. I may feel my own loss, but never will again repine at their dismissal from this vain and transitory scene of things, and entrance into real and permanent felicity and glory.

If we believe the holy scriptures to contain the words of truth and soberness, we cannot doubt of her happy discharge from this warfare, when I tell you the manner of her life, and the state of her soul, more especially during her last illness.

Mrs. Rogers was born of religious parents, near Maidstone in Kent; and she used often to thank God for their piety, and for the Christian education and example, which she was happy enough to enjoy in her youth. She had serious impressions on her mind from a child, and was early led to see into the plan of salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. When she was about six, or eight years of age, her convictions were such as made her frequently leave her little companions, and retire into private corners to pray, while they were enjoying themselves in play and recreation. Yea, her love to the word of God, and secret prayer appeared out of the common way. And, as she grew to years of maturity, her love to the word of God, and secret

cret prayer seemed to grow with her, and she was frequently favoured with gracious visits from the Lord. But yet, from a deep sense of her own unworthiness, and a certain diffidence of spirit, she was long withheld from professing *the knowledge of salvation by the pardon and remission of her sins*; although, at times, she was very happy in the love and favour of God; while her dispositions, words, and actions constantly declared the deep piety of her heart. Her acquaintance with Mr. Rogers commenced at Edinburgh, in the year 1775, and they were married in the year 1778, at Shoreham in Kent. The year after their marriage they removed to Leeds, where the Lord fully convinced her of the necessity of a further work of grace upon her soul than she had ever experienced. Her convictions of inbred sin were deeper than she had ever felt before, although she had no doubt of her interest in Christ Jesus, and of her being *an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ*. On the new year's day in the evening, after returning from renewing her covenant, as is customary among the Methodists, she was much distressed in her soul. Several persons came into the house and prayed with her, and the power of God was present to bless many: but still she felt

as though she were in chains, and wept bitterly. Soon as the company was gone, her husband endeavoured, in vain, to comfort her. They retired together for prayer, fell upon their knees, and wrestled mightily with God. All her chains fell off in a moment, and she declared in an extasy of joy, "that her soul was set at perfect liberty." She believed in the Lord; she praised him with joyful lips and a thankful heart, and rejoiced in the God of her salvation. And although her evidence did not always remain equally clear and comfortable, yet, from that time to the day of her death, none that knew her had the least reason to call in question the truth and sincerity of her religious profession. She appeared to grow in grace daily, especially in meekness and humility, in resignation and lowliness of mind, till the time her happy spirit returned with joy unto God who gave it.

And, before we proceed to take notice of her last sickness and death, I could wish to make mention of, and to recommend to all our imitation, but especially to those of her own sex, the following striking parts of her religious conduct.

When at any time circumstances of a disagreeable and trying nature had happened

pened in the societies to which she belonged, while others would have been talking over, and repeating grievances, her method always was, to retire immediately for secret prayer, where she usually left her burden with the Lord. She was of few words; no tatler; no busy body, but a keeper at home. She carefully refrained from speaking evil of any one; but when any had used her unkindly, or caused pain to her mind, she bore it in silence, and recommended them to God in prayer. She would never dispute with any one.

It was on the last new year's day that her danger began first to be discovered. After the renewal of the covenant, it was impressed deeply upon her husband's mind, that her sickness would be unto death. Being greatly distressed on her account, he went to her, and, after much entreaty, told her the cause of his uneasiness was owing to his fears for her safety. She replied, with her usual sweetness, "Perhaps my life may not be in danger. You can remember the time when I was reduced much lower than I am now, and yet the Lord restored me. He bringeth down to the grave and raiseth up again. The Lord can do great things. Nay, he hath done great

“ great things. Fear not, and all shall
 “ be well.”

Jan. 7th. She still continued to grow weaker. Besides many other things which passed in conversation concerning her past life, and the dealings of God with her soul, she said to her husband, “ What
 “ pleasure should it afford us, my dear,
 “ that we can look back on the five years
 “ we have lived together, and can say, we
 “ have been helps and not hindrances to
 “ each other in the ways of God? And
 “ what cause have you, as well as I, to be
 “ happy in the reflection, that we have
 “ never had one jarring string since we
 “ knew each other; that notwithstanding
 “ we have had many trials from others, yet
 “ we have never been the least cause of
 “ sorrow to each other? And if the Lord
 “ should take me now, you will follow me,
 “ but not yet. No, my dear, you have
 “ more to do and to suffer; but he who
 “ has hitherto supported, will still be your
 “ helper. You will live to be more useful,
 “ and more happy than ever. The Lord
 “ knows you are upright before him, so
 “ that you have nothing to fear. He will
 “ lay underneath you his everlasting arms,
 “ therefore go on, and let nothing dis-
 “ courage you. I believe the Lord will
 “ prosper

" prosper what you take in hand, and that
 " he will bless the children, and make them
 " his children. You may be discouraged
 " to think how you shall do with them
 " when I am gone; but you need not.
 " The Lord will raise you up friends where
 " you do not expect, and you shall want
 " for nothing; and what is best of all, I
 " shall meet you in glory!"

In the evening she desired the children,
 Joseph and Benjamin, might be brought to
 her bed side. She kissed them both, and
 prayed that the blessing of Jacob's God
 might ever attend them; and then added,
 " I believe God will bless you, and make
 " you a blessing to many. I believe he will
 " make you good men, and you will one
 " day follow me to heaven."

Jan. 14. A part of the morning she was
 scarce able to speak at all; but her mind
 seemed quite composed, and a heavenly
 sweetness was in her countenance. Her
 husband and Miss Roe prayed with her,
 and afterwards being seated by her on each
 side of the bed, she burst suddenly into
 tears. On being asked the cause, she said,
 " O! 'tis happiness makes me weep. I
 " am thinking of Jesus, and how his name
 " charms all the heavenly host, and the
 " thought is almost overcoming. O! he
 is

" is a precious Saviour! I have many rela-
 " tions in heaven who are near and dear
 " unto me; a father, a mother, and sisters;
 " and brothers, and others whom I loved
 " tenderly; but they are all nothing when
 " I think of Jesus; and I shall soon see
 " him and praise him better than I can
 " now. Angels will be blessed compani-
 " ons above: but O! they are nothing: I
 " can only think of Jesus. My sweet Sa-
 " viour! I do love thee! Where is that
 " hymn that speaks of Jesus as the subject
 " of all the angels' songs? The hymn was
 " read, though with many tears, while she
 " seemed to *rejoice with joy unspeakable and*
 " *full of glory.*

I.

" Burst, ye em'rald gates! and bring
 " To my raptur'd vision,
 " All th' extatic joys that spring
 " Round the bright Elysian.
 " Lo! we lift our longing eyes;
 " Break, ye intervening skies!
 " Son of Righteousness, arise,
 " Ope the gates of Paradise.

II.

" Floods of everlasting light
 " Freely flash before him;
 " Myriads with supreme delight
 " Instantly adore him!

" Angel-

- " Angel-trumps, resound his fame!
- " Lutes of lucid gold, proclaim
- " All the music of his name,
- " Heaven echoing the theme!

III.

- " Four and twenty Elders rise
- " From their princely station;
- " Shout his glorious victories,
- " Sing the great salvation;
- " Cast their Crowns before his throne,
- " Cry in reverential tone,
- " Glory be to God alone,
- " Holy, holy, holy One!

IV.

- " Hark! the thrilling symphonies
- " Seem, methinks, to seize us!
- " Join we too the holy lays,
- " Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!
- " Sweetest sound in seraph's song;
- " Sweetest note on mortal's tongue;
- " Sweetest carol ever sung,
- " Jesus! Jesus! flow along!

On the same day Mr. Joseph Roe called to see her, and being desired to walk up stairs into her room, she said to him, " The
" Lord favours me, Mr. Roe, in a pecu-
" liar manner. I have no pain; and, af-
" ter all my unworthiness, he gives me
" sweetly to rejoice in his love on a sick
" and dying bed. His condescension is so
" great, that, at times, a sense of it almost
" over-

“ overpowers me. He is a precious Sa-
 “ viour, indeed he is; and those that cleave
 “ to him with a sincere heart will ever find
 “ him so. He knows I am sincere, though
 “ very undeserving; and all I have ever
 “ feared, or that has harrassed my mind,
 “ has been, lest others should think me
 “ more than I am. I would not deceive
 “ any one by professing more than I pos-
 “ sess; the Lord knoweth. No; it would
 “ be an awful thing to do that. I would
 “ be sincere. It is good to be sincere.
 “ We shall all find it so when we come to
 “ a death bed. I could wish we might all
 “ live to God more than we have ever
 “ done. What is the world, or any thing
 “ in it? Jesus is all, and I shall praise him
 “ for ever, I know I shall.” While she
 spoke these words, she seemed to be in an
 extasy of joy and praise. Her sparkling
 eyes and out-spread arms made her to ap-
 pear as if she were even now about to
 take her flight to her immortal home.

In the evening she called upon those
 about her to sing, “ He comes, he comes,
 “ the judge severe.” And she sung the
 whole hymn with them so loud, that they
 were amazed, and much affected.

Jan. 18. She had a violent fit of cough-
 ing, and nature seemed in agonies. Her
 husband

husband said to her, My dear, this is hard work. She turned her languid face towards him, and said with a heavenly smile upon her countenance, "No, my dear, it is not. No, no, it is not hard. Jesus makes it sweet; he suffered much more for me. I should be ungrateful if I thought it hard, or if I had a murmuring thought. I am sensible it is the Lord's goodness to me, and am thankful it is so. My mind is composed, and I am sure all will be well."

Jan. 19th. This was an happy day to her. While her husband stood by the bed side, she looked at him and said, "The Lord bless you, my dear. He will bless you. What cause have I to be thankful for the day I first knew you? But for you I might have been cast into the way of a gay world; but the Lord made you the instrument of snatching me from it. I hope I shall be one diamond more in your crown, and shall praise God to all eternity for you. Go on, my dear, and the Lord will be with you."

Jan. 23d. George Pearson called to enquire after her, and by her desire he was asked up stairs. She gave him her hand and said, "Well, well, George, I am glad to see you. I love to see the Lord's children,

" children, and I believe you are one.
 " You have known the ways of God a long
 " time. The Lord has done much for you.
 " Yes, he has blessed you, and he will
 " bless you still. He is a good and faith-
 " ful God. I have ever proved him so,
 " and especially in this time of need. He
 " does bless me, and comfort me, and will
 " save me to the end. I believe you have
 " had many trials since you first set out in
 " the ways of God. You now grow nearer
 " the end of your journey. You will not
 " forsake the Lord now, and I am sure
 " he will not forsake you. No, no, the
 " Lord never forsakes his people. You see
 " he does not forsake me, unworthy as I
 " am." He prayed with her. She bade the
 Lord bless him, and said she found her
 mind much encouraged. All present were
 melted into tears of tenderness and love.

Some time after this, she called the maid
 to her and said, " Phœbe, be sure you be
 " a good girl. Serve the Lord; give him
 " your heart. Religion is the best thing,
 " Phœbe. Nothing else will do. Be truly
 " religious, and then you will be fit to
 " live, and fit to die. O! it is a blessed
 " thing to be devoted to God in our youth.
 " Don't forget what I say. I am dying.
 " You may live many years, or you may
 " follow me soon: we cannot tell. The
 " Lord

“ Lord knoweth. O think on these things,
 “ do. And then you will see me again in
 “ heaven.”

Jan. 24. Being asked how she felt, she replied, “ Very comfortable. I feel the Lord
 “ is good to me. And notwithstanding all
 “ my unworthiness, I believe he will accept me. Nay, he does accept me. I
 “ know that Jesus is mine, and I am his!
 “ I am indebted to his merit for all. I am
 “ saved entirely through Christ alone. I
 “ leave my every concern with him, and I
 “ am sure he will keep that which I have
 “ committed to his care. My husband,
 “ my children, my friends, my every care
 “ I leave with Jesus. I fully believe he
 “ will preserve them all, and we shall meet
 above.”

Jan. 26th. Being spent with coughing, when she had recovered a little, she said,
 “ Well, but I know my reward is with
 “ the Lord, and my God will be my
 “ help. And glory be to his dear name, I
 “ feel he doth help me. My trust is in
 “ the Lord; he is near unto me at all
 “ times.” And again, after a severe fit of sickness, and a sleepless night, she turned her face to Miss Roe and said, “ Well, my
 “ dear, I think the Lord will not tarry
 “ long now. O he is a sweet Saviour.

“ We shall soon meet where we shall re-
“ jice together for ever :

“ How shall we sing and triumph there,

“ Our dangers and escapes compare,

“ Our days of flesh and woe !

Yes, we shall, we shall.”

She continued in a rapture of joy, as one
just ready to take the wing, while Miss Roe
repeated the following verses from a divine
poet.

“ He looks from the skies,

“ He shews us the prize,

“ And gives us a sign

“ That we shall o’ercome by the mercy divine.

“ The Saviour of all,

“ For us he shall call,

“ Shall shortly appear,

“ Our day of eternal salvation is near.

“ For us is prepar’d

“ The angelical guard,

“ The convoy attends,

“ A ministr’ing host of invisible friends.

“ Ready wing’d for their flight,

“ To the regions of light,

“ The horses are come,

“ The chariots of Israel to carry us home.”

For several days she was exceedingly
weak, and could scarcely be heard to speak.
At times, however, she whispered, “ O
“ my

" my precious, precious Lord, thou wilt
 " not tarry long! I shall soon be with
 " thee. What a day will that be! I shall
 " praise thee for ever! O what sweetness,
 " what happiness I feel! I am quite re-
 " signed, entirely so. All the Lord does
 " is well done indeed! I am glad it is just
 " as it is; all is right. Come, Lord Jesus!
 " O come quickly! O come my dear Jesus,
 " do come and help me! Thou wilt come
 " soon. I shall soon be with thee!"

Feb. 15th. A little before three o'clock
 this morning she had a severe fit of cough-
 ing, and tried to get up the phlegm in
 vain. Her husband said to her, " You
 " have had a hard struggle, my dear; but
 " this also is permitted by him who loves
 " you tenderly. Yes, you are dear to
 " him. God has some good end to an-
 " swer in thus lengthening out your afflic-
 " tion. But your Lord is now saying, It
 " is enough! Only have faith and patience
 " a few minutes longer. This is patience's
 " last work, and it is nearly finished, so
 " shall you be *perfect and entire, lacking*
 " *nothing*. You are this moment suffering
 " all you ever shall suffer to all eternity.
 " You shall never, never, never suffer
 " again! Methinks I hear Jesus now say-
 " ing, Lo! I come quickly to wipe away
 " all

" all tears for ever from your eyes. It is
 " done. Thou shalt sorrow no more, nei-
 " ther shalt thou feel any more pain!"

She replied, " These are precious words.
 " They comfort me; and I believe it is all
 " true, and I shall prove it so. Yes, I
 " shall! I shall! I shall!" After this she
 lay composed about a quarter of an hour,
 silently breathing prayer and praise to God.
 Then the cough came on again, and a
 most severe struggle ensued, which threw
 her into the agonies of death. She was
 convulsed all over in a moment. While
 the agony was at the height, it was thought
 she was delirious. Just as it seized her, she
 cried, " Pray! pray! pray! O pray for
 " me." Her friends did so. The agony
 abated a little, and her reason returned.
 She instantly cried out with uncommon ve-
 hemency, clasping her hands, " My God!
 " My God! My Saviour! My King!"
 repeating it many, many times. Her hus-
 band replied, " Yes, my dearest creature,
 " your Saviour is coming to you. He is
 " here. Jesus is now standing by, and his
 " holy angels with him. They are all
 " waiting for you. See! See! their wings
 " are already spread out to bear you away."
 She cried out with an uncommon loud
 voice, " I know it! I know it! I know it
 " well!

"well! I know it well!" repeating the same words at least ten times over. She was then silent a little. When her husband could speak, he repeated to her these few lines of Mr. Pope;

"Hark! they whisper! angels say,

"Sister spirit come away!"

Telling her these her favourite verses were now compleatly fulfilled in her; that she was now in effect saying,

"Cease, fond nature, cease thy strife,

"And let me languish into life."

He was going on to the end of the verse; but just as he repeated

"Heaven opens on my eyes!"

She stopped him short by crying out so loud as to be heard down stairs, and through every room in the house, "See! See! See! What a fine man! See! See! See! What a fine man!"—The scene was very affecting. In that dread moment such a solemn awe fell upon all those about her, as if the Lord Jesus Christ were visibly present.

She continued with her eyes fixed, repeating the same words, "See! See! See! What a fine man!" for fifteen or twenty minutes without intermission, till her strength was quite exhausted. Then with
a lower

a lower voice she cried, "Come! Come!
 "Come! Saviour! Saviour! Come! Come!
 "Come!" And gently leaning back, she
 sweetly sunk into his arms.

And now, my dear brethren, what say
 you to these things? You see here is a ten-
 der, delicate, dying woman, in the 29th
 year of her age, speaking the language of
 heaven, while in the body upon earth; and
 triumphing over, and bidding defiance to,
 all the powers of death and the invisible
 world. Surely there is a reality in reli-
 gion. Or, if it be a delusion, it is such a
 delusion as I wish daily to be more and
 more affected with. What others may
 think of her dying scene and testimony I
 know not. It appears to me a noble in-
 stance of the power of faith and the effica-
 cy of religion. And, in spite of all the
 obloquy and opposition of a sneering and
 ridiculing world, I can freely and cheer-
 fully say, *Let me die the death of Mrs.
 Rogers, and let my last end be like hers.*
 Amen and Amen!



THE END.